



Postcards from the Edge (Part 2): Philemon

The Structure of the Bible

The Pauline (letters written by Paul) Epistles (with the exception of 1/2 Thessalonians and 1/2 Timothy) and the General Epistles (letters written by others), are in order of _____ length.

Introduction to Paul

_____ is Paul's last letter in the NT and is also a prison epistle (**Ephesians**, **Philippians**, and **Colossians** are the other Prison Epistles)

Introduction to Philemon

Philemon _____ Onesimus

Onesimus _____ away

Onesimus _____ to Christianity under Paul

Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with the epistle of Philemon to be _____

Schedule for the Series

Week 1: Setting the Stage (vv 1-3)

Week 2: Framing the Favor (vv 4-7)

Week 3: Asking for Assistance (vv 8-16)

Week 4: Optimistic for Obedience (vv 17-22)

Week 5: Finishing the Farewell (vv 23-25)

Names to Know

Paul: the author, currently in prison in Rome and probably around 60 years old

Timothy: the companion of Paul

Philemon (phil-e'-man): the main _____ of the letter and Onesimus' wronged owner

Apphia (aff-ee'-uh): a female to whom Paul also writes (possibly Philemon's wife)

Archippus (ar-kip'-us): a leader in the church (possibly Philemon's son); **Colossians 4:17**

Jesus: the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Onesimus: the _____ that ran away from Philemon his master and has returned

Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke: fellow-workers with Paul mentioned at the end



Fast Facts

This is the most _____ letter of Paul's in the entire New Testament—we see Paul's heartbeat and the way he treats his friends

The entire letter is only 335 words in the original Greek

Philemon is mentioned nowhere else in the entire New Testament

Philemon 1:1-3

Philemon 1:1a: Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

Questions:

1. Why do you think Paul used the word, 'prisoner'?
2. In 1-2 Timothy, Paul calls Timothy a 'son.' Now Paul calls him a, 'brother.' Why the change?

Philemon 1:1a-2: To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

Questions:

1. Is Paul buttering Philemon up or being truthful?
2. Why address it to the church in his home?

Philemon 1:3: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. Why would Paul use the same greeting in all of his letters?
2. What do you think is going through Philemon's mind at this point?

Next Week: Philemon 1:4-7: Framing the Favor

Homework: memorize Philemon 1:4-7 and be able to say it to your table

Homework: Read the entire epistle once through from the perspective of every single major character mentioned: Paul, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, Jesus, and Onesimus



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Philemon 1:4-7

Philemon 1:4: I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,

Questions:

1. Why would Paul constantly be praying for someone as loving as Philemon?

None of us can do anything _____ on our own.

2. Paul thanks God for Philemon. Why is it important that we become people of gratitude?



Philemon 1:5: hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,

Questions:

1. Knowing Paul's penchant for wordplay, what Greek word do you think he uses for 'love?'

Agape or phileo?

2. Do you have a hard time loving 'all' the saints?

John Calvin: This praise, which he bestows on Philemon, includes briefly the whole perfection of a Christian man. It consists of two parts, faith in Christ, and love towards our neighbors.

Philemon 1:6: that the sharing of your faith may become effective [_____] by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Questions:

1. Does anyone's translation have a different word than, 'sharing?'

Brian Smith: Paul is calling Philemon to the reality that faith must affect how we _____.

2. Take a minute or two to reflect silently on how energetic your *koinonia* is.

Philemon 1:7: For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

Ray Pritchard: This little letter is a masterpiece of persuasion. If you want to know how to write a letter to someone you need to convince, study the way Paul approached Philemon.

Questions:

1. Have you ever been cold and hungry and then had someone suddenly refresh you?

2. Who have you known that could consistently be described as refreshing the hearts of the saints?

Next Week: Philemon 1:8-16: Asking for Assistance

Homework: memorize **Philemon 1:8-16** and be able to say it to your table

Homework: Look up the meaning of Onesimus' name and read **Philemon** twice, looking for ways in which Paul uses the meaning of Onesimus' name



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Philemon 1:8-16

Philemon 1:8-9: 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—**

Questions:

1. Why didn't Paul just command Philemon?

Paul demonstrates true _____

2. 'Aged' or 'ambassador'?



Philemon 1:10-11: 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.

Questions:

1. Why did Paul call Onesimus, 'my son'?
2. What does Onesimus' name mean? _____

Philemon 1:12-14: 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.

Question:

1. Was it safe to send Onesimus back?

Philemon 1:15-16: 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.

Questions:

1. What Bible stories does verse 15 remind you of?
2. Does Paul abolish slavery?

People's New Testament: The gospel held Christian masters responsible for both the _____ and the _____ welfare of their servants.

Brian Smith: We are not allowed to hold pre-Christ sins against a _____.

Additional Thoughts

What exactly was Paul asking Philemon to do?

The **Deuteronomy 23:15-16** wrinkle

_____ required Onesimus to go back.

_____ required Philemon to forgive.

God's _____ made Onesimus a brother.

Repentance without restitution is _____

Next Week: Philemon 1:17-22: Optimistic for Obedience

Homework: memorize **Philemon 1:17-22** and be able to say it to your table

Homework: Think about times that someone paid a bill for you and times that you were hopeful that someone accomplished something that you asked him or her to do.



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Philemon 1:17-22

Philemon 1:17: If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would me*.

Questions:

1. Who do you count as a partner in your life?
2. We just finished Thanksgiving. Did you put on a 'happy face' when receiving anyone?

Philemon 1:18: But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account.

Questions:

1. Have you ever paid a bill for someone? How does that feel?
2. What is required of us when forgiving?

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

Philemon 1:19: 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.

Questions:

1. Have you ever had anyone offer to pay a bill before the bill had been calculated?
2. Who are you in non-monetary debt to?

Philemon 1:20: Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

Questions:

1. What has been your best monetary investment? Your worst?
2. What can we do to refresh the hearts of our pastors?

Philemon 1:21-22: 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.

Questions:

1. What's your 'even more'?
2. Was it right of Paul to check up on Philemon?

Next Week: Philemon 1:23-25: Finishing the Farewell

Homework: memorize **Philemon 1:23-25** and be able to say it to your table

Homework: Think about the people in your life that are depending on you to be the Christian that God has called you to be.



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Philemon 1:23-25

Philemon 1:23-24: Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

Questions:

1. How do the names in this list compare to [Colossians 4:7-16](#)?
2. Who helps keep you accountable?

Brian Smith:

We were never _____ to do it on our own.

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Five Guys Burners and Cries

Epaphras: lovely _____

John Mark: _____ starter

Aristarchus: riding _____

Demas: _____ finisher

Luke: prolific _____

Philemon 1:25: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Questions:

1. "Your" is plural. What does that indicate about 'their' spirit?
2. What does 'amen' mean?

Application (so what?)

Don't always use your _____.

Terry Brown: The issue of what happened is not the issue; reconciliation is the issue.

Terry Brown: As long as people work together, there will be a need for reconciliation.

Terry Brown: Forgiveness identifies us with _____.

Without reconciliation, there can be no _____.

Personalization (now what?)

Patience

Tact

Personal appeal

Individual example

Initiative

Summary

Martin Luther: for we are _____ His Onesimi

Alissa Calhoun: Onesimus means "useful" which was what Paul was wanting Philemon to do . . . to use Onesimus although Onesimus had not been useful to Philemon when he was with him before. It shows that the Lord can change _____ willing to give Him their heart and control of their life and make them useful for Christ.