

The Epistle To Philemon



Sermon Outline

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Table Of Contents

A Model Of Christian Courtesy (1:1-25)	3
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The Epistle To Philemon

A Model Of Christian Courtesy (1:1-25)

INTRODUCTION

1. There is a book in the New Testament which has been described as:
 - a. A model of Christian courtesy
 - b. A manifestation of Christian love
 - c. A monument of Christian conversion
2. That book is Paul's epistle to Philemon, the shortest of all of Paul's letters
3. In this lesson, we shall take a brief look at this unique letter

[Before actually reading it, it might be helpful to consider some...]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. THE AUTHOR...

1. The apostle **Paul**, of course
2. As clearly indicated in verses **1, 9, 19**

B. THE TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING...

1. By carefully comparing this epistle with the one to the Colossians, it is clear that both were written at the same time and from the same place
 - a. Like Colossians, the epistle to Philemon was written while Paul was in chains - **Phile 1, 10,13,23; Co 4:18**
 - b. Timothy joined Paul in both epistle - **Phile 1; Co 1:1**
 - c. Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke joined in the salutations of both - **Phile 23,24; Co 4:10-14**
 - d. Onesimus, the subject of the epistle to Philemon, was one of the messengers by whom the epistle to the Colossians was sent - **Co 4:7-9**
2. If the epistle to Philemon was written about the time of Colossians and the other "prison epistles" (Ephesians and Philippians)...
 - a. Then it was written during Paul's imprisonment at **Rome**, the time mentioned in **Ac 28: 30-31**
 - b. This would make it sometime during **61-63 A.D.**

C. THE MAIN CHARACTERS...

1. **Philemon**
 - a. He was likely a member of the church at Colosse
 - b. A very hospitable one, as we shall see
 - c. It is possible that he was one of Paul's own converts - cf. **Phile 19**
2. **Apphia** - possibly the wife of Philemon

3. **Archippus**
 - a. Thought by many to be the son of Philemon
 - b. A minister of the gospel - cf. **Co 4:17**
4. **Onesimus**
 - a. He had been one of Philemon's slaves - **Phile 16**
 - b. Who had evidently run away - **Phile 15**
 - c. Somehow, he had traveled from Colosse to Rome, found Paul, and was converted to Christ - **Phile 10**
 - d. He had become very dear to Paul, and very useful - **Phile 11-13; Co 4:10**

D. THE OCCASION FOR THIS LETTER...

1. Paul did not think it right to keep Onesimus with him in Rome, and was therefore sending him back to Philemon
2. This letter to Philemon is an appeal by Paul...
 - a. To receive Onesimus back, now as a brother in Christ
 - b. To forgive him if he had done any wrong

[With this background information, let's now **read the epistle**, noticing...]

II. THE MAIN DIVISIONS

A. PAUL'S GREETINGS (1-3)

B. PAUL'S THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR PHILEMON (4-7)

C. PAUL'S PLEA IN BEHALF OF ONESIMUS (8-21)

D. PAUL'S CONCLUDING REMARKS (22-25)

[With a reading of the epistle fresh on our minds, let me suggest some...]

III. OBJECTIVES FOR STUDYING THIS EPISTLE

A. TO BE IMPRESSED WITH THE LOVING HOSPITALITY THAT CHARACTERIZED THE EARLY CHRISTIANS...

1. Philemon opening his house for the church to meet - **Phile 1-2**; cf. also **Ro 16:3-5; 1 Co 16:19**
 2. His love for all the saints - **Phile 5**; cf. also **Co 1:4; 2 Th 1:3**
 3. How he refreshed the hearts of the saints - **Phile 7**; cf. also **1 Co 16:15-18**
 4. How Paul could depend upon on him for a place to stay - **Phile 22**
- **Certainly an example worthy of imitation!**

B. TO LEARN TACT IN DEALING WITH OTHERS...

1. Paul could have "commanded" Philemon, but instead he "appealed" to him - **Phile 8-9**
2. He introduced the subject of his appeal "gradually" - **Phile 10** (in the Greek, the name of Onesimus is the last word in the sentence)

3. He refused to compel Philemon to let him retain Onesimus in Rome, but sent him back
- **Phile 12-14**
4. He offers to pay Philemon for any wrong incurred by Onesimus - **Phile 18-19**
5. He believes in the basic goodness of Philemon, not suspicious of how he will react - **Phile 21**

CONCLUSION

1. From both the example of Paul and Philemon, there is much to be gleaned from reading and meditating on this very short epistle
 - a. From **Philemon**, a model of Christian hospitality
 - b. From **Paul**, a model of Christian courtesy
2. If you have not ever carefully studied this epistle before, I hope that this brief lesson has whetted your desire to do so in the future
3. In closing we notice the last verse:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen”

Are we living in such a way to allow the grace of the Lord Jesus to be in our lives?