

Reconciled

A STUDY IN PHILEMON

An Introduction
November 3, 2019

Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. - **Philemon 1-3**

I. PHILEMON: PURPOSE AND OCCASION

- Paul wrote a general letter to the church in Colossae along with a personal letter to Philemon, a leader in the church.
- Paul is making an appeal to Philemon (and possibly his family and the church in Colossae) on behalf of Onesimus, a slave owned by Philemon (vs. 10).
- Onesimus has become a Christ-follower (and likely a fugitive slave), and now is being sent back to his master for reconciliation (vss. 10, 12, 17).
- Onesimus (“profitable”) has become “useful” to Paul (vs. 11).
- Paul would like to keep Onesimus with him if possible (v. 13).
- Paul would like for Philemon to now view Onesimus in a new light (vs. 16).
- Paul would like Philemon to set Onesimus free and send him back to Paul for use in ministry [Jym’s interpretation] (vs. 14).
- At the least, Onesimus must be welcomed back as a fellow believer (vs. 17).
- Overall, Paul is seeking some benefit from Philemon (vs. 20).

II. PAUL - THE PRISONER FOR JESUS

- Paul pens (dictates) this letter circa A.D. 60-62. Likely from his confinement in Rome (Acts 28:11-31; Col. 1:24, 4:10).
- In a metaphorical sense, all true followers of Jesus Christ are slaves and prisoners (Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 6:15-23; 1 Cor. 9:19).

III. PHILEMON’S HOME - A PLACE FOR MINISTRY

- Less we miss this vital reality - Philemon’s home is a place for ministry. Christ has invaded Philemon’s life, and now his life demonstrates that he serves a master (Col. 4:1; 1 Cor. 7:22-23).

KNOW: We see in Paul’s introduction a ministry that is taking place in Colossae. A church is meeting in a home. Our lives should be centers for Christian ministry.

DO: Live like a slave of Jesus Christ. Get busy in ministry.

Suggested Reading:

The Radical Disciple by John R.W. Stott (LifePoint Library #284.4)

Questions/Discovery Points for Life Groups/Families

Please Read the Letter to Philemon

1. Talk about the who, what, where, why of this letter. What’s your take on the overall purpose?
2. Paul is a prisoner for the Lord. Paul means it physically and spiritually. What does being a prisoner for the Lord mean to you?
3. Paul loves the phrase “grace and peace.” How do we attain those?
4. We talked about using your life as a platform for ministry. How do we go about preparing to do that?
5. Paul calls Philemon a “beloved fellow worker.” What can we learn from Paul about Christian friendships/partnerships?
6. What is one application point for you from the message or from your understanding of the letter to Philemon?