

PHILEMON 4-21

INTRODUCTION

1. The letter consists of twenty-five verses and is the briefest of Paul's epistles.
 1. It is one of the prison epistles and was sent by Onesimus to Philemon, Onesimus' master, from whom Onesimus had fled. (Onesimus means: Profitable or useful) Col. 4:9
2. Date of the letter: Written near A. D. 62-64. Place of writing: Written from the same place as Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Rome no doubt.
3. PURPOSE OF THE LETTER: Onesimus was a run-away slave belonging to Philemon. Onesimus had fled to Rome where providentially he came in contact with Paul and obeyed the gospel of Christ. He may have been imprisoned in Rome and there met Paul.
 - (1. Paul had learned the circumstances, urged Onesimus to do what was right by returning to his master Philemon.
 - (2. Paul urged Philemon to do what was right in receiving Onesimus back.
4. THE CHARACTER OF THE LETTER
 1. The letter has been called by many, THE COURTEOUS LETTER note and higher key each time)
 2. The key word of the letter is RECEIVE, verses 12, 15, 17. (It seems he strikes a louder ⁵)
 3. The message of the letter is: THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

PHILEMON: THE MAN ADDRESSED. What kind of a man was Philemon?

1. He was a man of Christian love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints. V. 5
2. Two graces of Philemon: Faith in the Lord Jesus and love toward all saints. Though mentioned separately here they never exist separately: Gal. 5:6
3. I do not know how long it had been since Paul saw Philemon.

THE LAW OF LOVE SHOWS UP IN THIS SHORT LETTER

1. Love is neither a weak sentiment nor is it a mere influence; love law and power... Love is the highest law and the ultimate power for good in the universe. In the home; the church.
2. Love is the basis for real friendship. Jesus said, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." John 15:15. The basis of this friendship for Jesus: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14

AN EVALUATION OF THE LETTER

1. It is an example of tact and wisdom; a masterpiece as a model of graceful, tactful, and delicate pleading. Some examples:
 1. Paul desired to touch a cord of tenderness in Philemon's heart by mentioning his imprisonment and describing himself as "Paul the aged." Verses 1, 9
 2. Paul acknowledges Philemon excellencies, which would make it most difficult for any man not exercise such excellencies in forgiveness, Verses 4-7, in this instance Onesimus.
 3. The appeal not to a command... enjoined, or order: "Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ." V. 9
 4. It is an example of tact and wisdom in that Paul had delayed to mention the name Onesimus until the 10th verse of this epistle.
 5. It is an example of right method in making an appeal: Paul acknowledges Onesimus as his ^{V. 10} son and expresses confidence that Philemon would do even more than requested.
 6. This letter affords us an example in the right choice of words. Paul says, "Departed," not "fled" or "escaped." He describes the time as "For a season"... only for a short while
 - (1) He was careful not to say one word that would arouse resentful feelings.. Our choice very poor at times. Example:
 - (2) The woman whose husband had been killed. Who could tactfully tell her? The preacher selected. He went and here is what he said, "Are you the widow Brown?"

THE LETTER AFFORDS AN ILLUSTRATION OF SOCIAL REFORM

1. PRESENT DAY METHODS

1. By demand, order, riot, insurrection, sit-ins, and you name it!
2. By wars and murder as in our own Civil War in the states. By laws passed by men.

2. THE BIBLE METHOD

1. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by compulsion...making men do things.
(1) Paul did not order, command Philemon but "for love's sake I rather beseech thee." V.9
2. The gospel of Christ through persuasion, gentleness, seeks to overthrow by beginning within; not by attack from without. FIRST: To the heart, then to the eyes, hands, feet.

THIS LETTER AFFORDS US AN EXAMPLE OF OUR REDEMPTION

1. The sinner is God's property, and he has not only run away from his Master, but he has robbed him as well.
2. It is the duty of the sinner to return to God, and the grace of God concedes him this right of appeal.
3. Onesimus had to come back to Philemon; make his acknowledgements.

THE LETTER AFFORDS US AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF LOVE

1. Let love like this reign in the hearts of men everywhere:
 1. It will slay infidelity.
 2. It will annihilate hatred.
 3. It will destroy suspicion.
 4. It will sweep misunderstanding *away*.
 5. It will swallow up all superficial distinctions and differences in this world.

DEARBORN VALLEY

Church of Christ

17200 WEST OUTER DRIVE DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

1. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by compulsion... making men do things.

2. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by persuasion, but by love's power.

3. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by force, but by love's power.

4. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by fear, but by love's power.

5. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by shame, but by love's power.

6. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by honor, but by love's power.

7. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by wealth, but by love's power.

8. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by poverty, but by love's power.

9. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by life, but by love's power.

10. The gospel of Christ does not seek to gain its end by death, but by love's power.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AS AN EXAMPLE OF OUR BEHAVIOR

1. The sinner in God's property, and he has not only run away from his Master, but he has

2. It is the duty of the sinner to return to God, and the grace of God conceals his sins.

3. The sinner should not come back to fillamony; make his acknowledgements.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF LOVE

1. Let love like this reign in the hearts of men everywhere:

2. It will conquer sin.

3. It will conquer death.

4. It will conquer hell.

5. It will conquer all.

6. It will conquer all.

7. It will conquer all.

8. It will conquer all.

9. It will conquer all.

10. It will conquer all.