

PHILEMON

-We will now study the letter called Philemon.

-When Paul was in prison in Rome and Timothy was with him, God through Paul wrote this letter to Philemon.

-Philemon was one of the leaders of the church in the city of Colosse.

-It seems that both this letter to Philemon and the letter to the Colossians were written at about the same time.

Let's read Philemon 1

1-Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother. To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker.

-Even though Paul was in a prison in Rome, what did he call himself?

-A prisoner of Christ Jesus.

-Three times in this letter, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

-What did Paul mean that he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus?

-He meant that his heart was chained to the heart of Christ Himself.

-The hearts of all Christians are chained to Christ.

-The problem is that we do not understand this truth, or we forget this truth.

-Christ has made His home in our hearts.

-When we understand this, we do not live for ourselves, but allow Christ to live in us.

-If we allow Him, the Lord Jesus will lead us.

-If we allow Him, the Lord Jesus will act through us.

-If we allow Him, the Lord Jesus will speak through us.

-When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He allowed the Father to lead, act, and speak through Him.

-In John 5:19, Christ said this: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself" (Jn 5:19).

-This is because the heart of the Lord Jesus was and is forever chained to the heart of our Father God.

-And the hearts of all Christians are chained to Christ.

Let's read Philemon 2-3

2- Also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier—and to the church that meets in your home:

3-Grace and peace to you from God our Father and

the Lord Jesus Christ.

-It is thought that Apphia was the wife of Philemon, and that Archippus was the son of Philemon.

-In verse 2, we learn that the church in Colosse met at Philemon's house.

-Before they built churches, Christians met in the homes of other Christians.

-Many religions believe that a religious building has power.

-This is not true, as no building has power.

-Many religions believe that a religious building saves them.

-This is not true, as only belief in Christ saves us.

-Many religions believe that God lives in their religious building.

-This is not true, as God is spirit, and is everywhere at all times.

-A religious building is only a place for people to meet.

-As in his other letters, Paul sends to Philemon the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's read Philemon 4-7

4-I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers,

5-because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus.

6-I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.

7-Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

-Paul prayed that his partnership with Philemon would deepen his understanding of all that Christ has done for us.

-God wants all Christians to have a deeper understanding of all that Christ has done for us, and this happens in partnership.

-Partnership of Christians can also encourage us, giving us great joy and refreshing our hearts.

Let's read Philemon 8-10

8-Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do,

9-Yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—

10-That I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

-With these verses, we learn that Paul is appealing to Philemon for a man named Onesimus.

-Who is Onesimus?

-Onesimus was Philemon's slave who escaped, and ran away to Rome.

-It was in Rome where Paul met Onesimus.

-Why did Paul call Onesimus his son who became his son while he was in chains?

-Onesimus became Paul's spiritual son when he believed in Christ as he was taught by Paul who was in chains.

-Even though Paul was in chains, he continued to teach about God.

-Even though Paul was in chains, God continued to use Paul to bring people to faith in Christ.

-Even though we may have difficulties, we must continue to teach about God that God would use our teaching to bring people to faith in Christ.

-Paul was not ordering Philemon, but rather, he was appealing in love to Philemon.

-As we read more, we will understand what Paul is appealing.

Let's read Philemon 11

11-Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

-The name Onesimus means "useful."

-Before, Onesimus was useless because he did not believe in Christ.

-Now, Onesimus believed in Christ and became useful.

-In a sense, all who do not believe in Christ are useless, but all who do believe in Christ are useful.

-We are useful to God, working alongside of Him to help Him to build His kingdom.

Let's read Philemon 12-14

12-I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.

13-I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel.

14-But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary.

-Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him so that Onesimus could continue to help Paul.

-Yet, Paul also knew that he needed to send Onesimus back to Philemon so that Onesimus could correct that which he did was wrong.

-What did Onesimus do that was wrong?

-Firstly, Onesimus was a slave of Philemon and escaped and ran away.

-Secondly, as we will read in verse 19, it seems that Onesimus stole from Philemon before he escaped.

-What is the lesson here?

-As Christians, we should try and correct that which we have done wrong.

-If we have hurt someone, we should ask for forgiveness.

-If we have taken something from someone, we should give it back.

-If we have said something to someone that was wrong, we should apologize.

-Why is it important to try and correct that which we have done wrong?

-Because the wrong can continue to hurt us and hurt others if it is not corrected.

-Here is an illustration:

-If you have a cut or a wound on your arm or leg, but do not take care of it, it can become worse.

-If, however, you put medicine on the cut or wound, it will heal.

-God wants us to be healthy and healed from all of our spiritual cuts and wounds.

-If we wrong someone, are we able to force them to forgive us?

-No.

-Forgiveness cannot be forced, but must come only from the person who was wronged.

-What happens if we try and correct a wrong, but the other person will not accept?

-Then, we have done all that we can do.

-Romans 12:18 says this:

-“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

-This verse means that we must do all that we should do.

-This is why Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, so that Paul and Onesimus would do all that they could to correct the wrong.

Let's read Philemon 15-16

15-Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—

16-No longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

-God can take any problem and turn it into good.

-Onesimus was a slave and ran away which was a big problem, but God took the problem, and turned it into good.

-When Onesimus was a slave and ran away from Philemon, he was not a believer in Christ.

-After having been taught by Paul in Rome, Onesimus was now a believer in Christ.

-This is the meaning of verse 15 which says that Philemon “might have [Onesimus] back forever.”

-Onesimus left as a slave, but he was returning as a

brother in Christ for Philemon.

Let's read Philemon 17-19

17-So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

18-If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.

19-I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self.

-It seems as if Onesimus stole from Philemon before he escaped, yet Paul told him that he would pay Philemon back.

-Even though it was Onesimus who had stolen, it was Paul who was offering to pay back Philemon.

-What is the lesson here?

-As Christians, we should be willing to help other Christians, especially when they want to correct the wrong that they have done.

Let's read Philemon 20-22

20-I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

21-Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

22-And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

-Paul was not forcing Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to free him as his slave.

-Yet, as brothers in Christ, to forgive and to free Onesimus would be a benefit for Paul, a benefit for Philemon, and benefit for Onesimus, and a benefit for the entire family of Christ.

-We know that Paul and Philemon were close brothers because Paul was asking him to prepare a guest room for him.

-We also know that Philemon was praying for Paul to be released from prison, and that Paul was expecting God to answer Philemon's prayer.

Let's read Philemon 23-25

23-Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.

24-And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

25-The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

-Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke with Paul while he was in prison.

-Paul mentions Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke in the letter to the Colossians.

-This helps us to understand that Philemon and Colossians were written at the same time.

-God also used Mark and Luke to write three books in the Bible: Mark, Luke, and Acts.

-What are some important lessons in this book called Philemon?

-Like Onesimus, we were all slaves of Satan.

-Like Onesimus, it is the Lord Jesus who saves us from the slavery of Satan.

-Like Onesimus, it is the Lord Jesus who changes us from being useless to being useful to God and His kingdom.

-Like Philemon, we are called by God to forgive those who have wronged us.

-Like Philemon, we are called by God to accept all who have been saved by God from the slavery of Satan.

-This is Christian love and Christian forgiveness.

-This is the family of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.