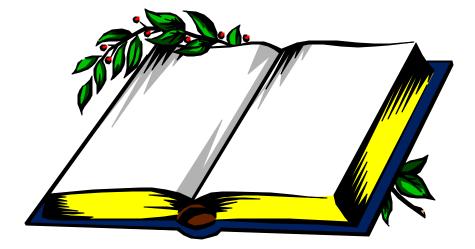
The Epistle To Philemon



Sermon Outline

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

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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...

- 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)

- 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?