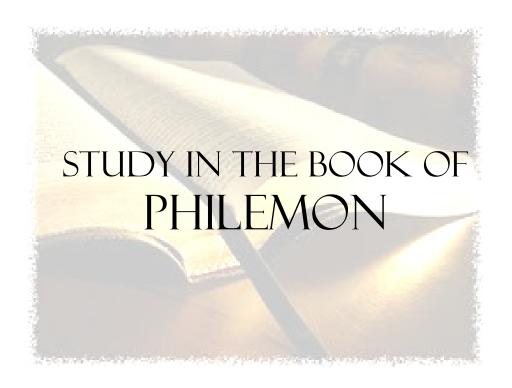


CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



By: Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwardes

PHILEMON

STUDY 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Studies is Philemon - G. Scroggie Colossians and Philemon - Herbert Carson

Colossians and Philemon - G. Wilson Titus and Philemon - E. Hilbert

INTRODUCTION

Philemon and 3 John are the only strictly private letters of the apostolic writings. <u>Martin</u> <u>Luther</u> "The Epistle shows a lovely example of Christian love" It is a very short letter yet eleven people are mentioned in it.

1. THE TITLE AND THE BACKGROUND.

Philemon was a believer in Colossae and together with other Christians was a slave owner. One of his slaves Onesimus had apparently stolen and run away, which under Roman law punishable by death. But in the providence of God Onesimus met Paul and he was wonderfully converted. The object of the letter was to urge Philemon to accept Onesimus back, not as a slave but as a beloved brother.

2. THE AUTHOR AND THE DATE.

Paul wrote this short letter about the year 60 AD, while he was in prison and he sent it to Colossae with Thychics and Onesimus.

3. THE THEME AND THE MESSAGE

As mentioned Paul writes this personal appeal to ask Philemon to accept Onesimus as a Christian brother. **Baur** "This letter is penetrated with the noblest Christian spirit."

1. THE SALUTATION (v.1-2)

A. The writer (v.1)

He is called Paul a prisoner of Christ Jesus

i) His name

What a story that name Paul recalls, the preacher, the pastor, the man of prayer, chief of sinners, Christian, scholar, saint.

ii) Prisoner of Christ Jesus.

He does not introduce himself as the apostle who had the right to demand obedience to his requests; rather he speaks as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. How could Philemon resist an appeal, which was written within the prison walls with a hand in chains? The less is a big one for us today: Carson "The pastor can only appeal to his people for sacrifice and self discipline if he himself knows the meaning of discipline in his own life, otherwise his call is empty and lifeless."

iii) And Timothy our brother.

The reason why Timothy is mentioned is because Philemon knew Timothy and also Timothy was going to succeed Paul

B. The readers (v.1-2)

i) The addressee: To Philemon.

Philemon was probably converted in Ephesus during Paul's stay there (Acts 19:10). He became a dear friend and also a fellow-worker and together they served the Lord

- ii) The associates.
 - a) Apphia Philemon's wife
 - b) Archippus Philemon's son

But the wonderful testimony of this family was that the church used to meet in their home.

iii) The greeting (v.3)

Grace and peace to you, this was Paul's familiar greeting coming from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. THE THANKSGIVING (v.4-7)

As was Paul's custom he begins this letter with a paragraph of thanksgiving and intercession, it indicates to us that devotional spirit of the apostle.

A.The nature (**v. 4**)

"I always" - his habitual practice.

i) Godward

When he hears of the growth of the work

ii) Personal

"My God," Paul was conscious of a personal relationship with God.

iii) Continual

"Always" Not only was there thanksgiving, but he says I remember you in my prayers, here was a glimpse of the great prayer ministry of Paul, so broad was his spiritual love that he daily spread out before God the conditions of a number of churches as well as his fellow workers, he mentioned them by name and he entered into their circumstances.

iv) Thanksgiving occurred when Paul prayed

B. The cause (v.5)

He was full of praise because of the good reports he had heard about Philemon (Col 1:7-8, 4: 12), they probably came from Epaphras. There were two causes:

- Their faith in the Lord Jesus.
 They were living lives of total dependence on Jesus.
- ii) Their love for **all** the saints.

 Philemon was a man of tremendous faith and love.

C. The contents (v.6)

- i) He prays that they will be **active** in sharing their faith. This will include all forms of evangelism.
- ii) So that you will have a **full understanding**This means a clear grasp of spiritual truth, in other words, faith grows our understanding deepens as we share our faith.

D. The basis (v.7)

You have given me great joy, not only that but Philemon's love encouraged Paul, but not only that he refreshed the hearts of all Christians.

3. THE APPEAL (v.8-21)

- **A.** The preparation for making the appeal (v.8-16)
 - i) The <u>one making the appeal</u> (v.8-9)
 - a) His attitude (v.8)
 I appeal to you on the basis of love, Paul could have commanded Philemon to accept Onesimus, but he doesn't he rather appeals from love.
 - b) His position (v.9)
 He was an old man and a prisoner, probably in his early 60s (2
 Cor 11:23-28)
 - ii) The <u>person for whom the appeal is made</u> (v.10-11) Following his touching introduction Paul now makes his appeal on behalf of Onesimus.
 - a) His relation to Paul (**v.10**)
 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus. Paul was his spiritual father, as he was to Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

b) His transformed personality (v.11)
Formerly he was useless now he has become useful. Wilson
"Christianity knows nothing of hopeless cases." It turns the useless into useful people.

iii) The action of Paul (v.12-14)

Having informed Philemon of the change that has happened to Onesimus.

- a) The action stated (v.12)
 I am sending Onesimus back to you. Onesimus was willing to go back to demonstrated the genuineness of his conversion.
- b) The action interpreted (v.12-14)
 He calls Onesimus my very heart, shows the strength of Paul's affection for him. It wasn't easy to send Onesimus back, it also meant Paul no longer had his services, but he says I'm sending him back to you.
- iv) The <u>suggestion of Providential overruling</u> (v. 15-16)
 Instead of stressing the desertion of Onesimus, Paul rather emphasizes how God overruled that evil for good. <u>Lightfoot</u> "Onesimus departed as a reprobate but he retuned a saved man". This meant that Onesimus had now become a dear brother to Philemon and so Paul urges him to accept him back in love.

B. The formation of the request (v.17-21)

- i) Statement of request (v.17)

 After a long delay the request is now formally stated: "Welcome Onesimus home." In the same way that he would welcome Paul. The past must be forgiven and the new start must begin.
- ii) The promise of Paul (v.18-19)
 If Onesimus does owe Philemon anything and he still wants it from Onesimus then Paul says: "Charge it to me," He says: I will pay it back." However he says: "not to mention you owe me your very self, in other words in comparison to what Philemon owes Paul, Onesimus really owes nothing."
- iii) The appeal to Philemon (v.20)

 He appeals to Philemon to "refresh my heart in Christ." By accepting Onesimus Philemon would give Paul both encouragement and refreshment amidst the discouragements of his imprisonment.
- iv) The confidence of Paul (**v.21**)

 Deep down Paul was confident that Philemon would do "even more than I ask."

3. THE CONCLUSION (v.22-25)

Paul now concludes this letter and with a personal request in anticipation of his coming visit to Colossae (v.22)

A. The personal request (v.22)

Paul asks for a guest room for his visit because he is hoping to be released from prison soon, as a result of their prayers so he asks for accommodation.

B. The greetings from friends (v.23-24)

Five of his companions also send greeting: Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke and Epaphras. All of his ministry, Paul was a team man.

C. The benediction (v.25)

Paul's loveliest letter is now brought to a fitting conclusion with the same word "grace." As we look back on this letter we are impressed with its beauty and its charm, its Christian courtesy and consideration of others, all the result of the Holy Spirit at work. With the closing of this letter we hear nothing more of Philemon and Onesimus, but there is no doubt that Philemon would have accepted Onesimus with love. This is Paul's loveliest letter