



TO FORGIVE



Philemon



Giving the offenses
to God

Carrying the offenses
myself

1. Who is writing this letter? (Philemon 1:1) _____
2. Who is the letter written to? (Philemon 1:2) _____
3. What positive things did Paul say about Philemon? (Philemon 1:4-7)

4. This is a very personal letter. How do we know that? (Philemon 1:19)

5. Who led Philemon to faith in Jesus Christ? (Philemon 1:19) _____

PHILEMON AND THE CHURCH IN COLOSSE

6. ___Yes ___No Epaphras was a member of the church in Colosse. (Col. 4:12-13)
(Some think that Paul assigned Epaphras to start the Colosse church.)
7. What was the name of the young man mentioned in both Col. 4:17 & Phile. 1:1) _____
(The mention of this man in both Philemon & Colosse tell us that Philemon attended the Colosse church.)
8. Furthermore, in whose house did the Colosse church meet? (Phile. 1:2) _____

Question #5 above states that Paul led Philemon to the Lord. Since Paul apparently never visited Colosse (though he sailed by), he must have met Philemon somewhere in that region. Eventually, Philemon ended up in Colosse, maybe with the invitation of Epaphras & his staff.

9. Read Phile. 1:1 & 1:16. Notice the two phrases: "and to the church in your house" and "no longer as a slave". What do these two phrases tell you about Philemon's financial condition? _____
(Colosse was a thriving city before Paul's time. It had lots of flocks & manufactured a brand of wool called "colossinus".)

PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS

"Philemon" means "friendly" or "the capacity to be friendly". (From "phileo" = brotherly love). Even before he became a believer, he was a friendly person, but the presence of Jesus in his life made it stronger.

"Onesimus" means "profitable" or "the capacity to be useful".

10. ___Yes ___No It is probably that Philemon was a successful businessman in the town of Colosse and had slaves, one being Onesimus.
11. ___Yes ___No Do you think the two men knew each other/had a connection before?

WITH LIMITED FACTS, HERE IS WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW:

- *Onesimus knew he was a slave, and probably didn't like it.*
- *Onesimus knew, according to law, that his whole life until death would probably be as a slave.*
- *Onesimus' performance might have been "who once was unprofitable to you".*
- *Onesimus had probably heard of the Apostle Paul even though Paul never visited there.*
- *Onesimus knew that Philemon was a believer, especially since a church met on the property.*
- *Onesimus stole money so that he could travel to wherever he was going.*
- *Obviously, Onesimus' running away & meeting Paul was a mystery but God had His hand in it.*

NOW TO PAUL'S LETTER

Philemon 1:8-16 Now I want to ask a favor of you. I could demand it of you in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do, but I love you and prefer just to ask you—I, Paul, an old man now, here in jail for the sake of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ My plea is that you show kindness to my child Onesimus, whom I won to the Lord while here in my chains. ¹¹ Onesimus (whose name means "Useful") hasn't been of much use to you in the past, but now he is going to be of real use to both of us. ¹² I am sending him back to you, and with him comes my own heart.

¹³ *I really wanted to keep him here with me while I am in these chains for preaching the Good News, and you would have been helping me through him, ¹⁴ but I didn't want to do it without your consent. I didn't want you to be kind because you had to but because you wanted to. ¹⁵ Perhaps you could think of it this way: that he ran away from you for a little while so that now he can be yours forever, ¹⁶ no longer only a slave, but something much better—a beloved brother, especially to me. Now he will mean much more to you too, because he is not only a servant but also your brother in Christ.*

12. What did Paul asked Philemon to do? _____
13. ___Yes ___No Did Paul demand that Philemon forgive Onesimus?
14. ___Yes ___No Could Philemon have taken Onesimus back as a slave at the request of Paul without actually forgiving him?
15. Where was Paul when he met up with Onesimus? _____
16. ___Yes ___No Does it appear to you that Paul knew Philemon so well, that Paul was confident Philemon would do the right thing?
17. ___Yes ___No Would it be the right thing for Philemon to forgive & take him back?

WAIT A MINUTE:

- *Onesimus left his position as a slave without the permission of his master.*
- *Onesimus stole either money or merchandise to finance his trip.*
- *Philemon & Onesimus were both probably Jews, though some say they were Greeks.*
- *If Philemon was a non-Jew & did not follow the Jewish law, then treatment of run-away slaves was extremely severe; Paul would not have sent him back.*
- *Now that Philemon is a believer, his runaway slaves would be punished properly.*
- *Onesimus humiliated Philemon among his people & violated any trust they had.*

18. ___Yes ___No Would you forgive Onesimus?
19. ___Yes ___No Would God expect you to?
20. ___Yes ___No Would you be able to forgive Onesimus, and then treat him the same?
21. ___Yes ___No Have you noticed how hard it is to forgive someone close to you?
22. What would you do if you were Philemon? (Be honest) _____
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