

“Grow In Grace”
Philemon 1-3

Introduction:

1. Has There Ever Been A Time In Your Life:
 - When - Your World - The World As You Then Knew It:
 - Was Turned Upside-Down?
 - We Know Several Parents:
 - Who Recently Had Their Worlds:
 - Turned Upside-Down!
 - Through The Deaths:
 - And Even The Serious Injuries:
 - Of Their Own Children!
 - And - Life As They Knew It:
 - Changed - Forever!
 - And Questions Begin To Flood Their Exhausted Minds & Troubled Hearts!
 - What Will I Do?
 - Where Can I Go?
 - And - Why?
 - These Are All Legitimate Questions!
 - But - As Long As We Live In A Fallen World:
 - A World Affected:
 - By Evil And Sin - This Is The Way It Will Continue To Be!
2. And - Even If You Are A Christian:
 - You Are Not Immune:
 - To These Life-Altering Upheavals!
 - And This Morning - We Will See This Truth On Display:
 - In The Life Of A Man Named:
 - Philemon!
 - Philemon:
 - Was A Fairly Well-To-Do Man:
 - Who Lived With His Family:
 - In The Town Of Colosse!
 - As Most Men Of Means:
 - During That Time Period:
 - He Also Had A Number Of Slaves:
 - That Belonged To Him As Property, Just As Much As The Home In Which He Lived!
3. Well - In The New Testament Letter:
 - Which Bears His Name - Please Turn There With Me, If You're Not There Already:
 - We Discover That At Some Point In His Life:
 - Philemon Was Confronted With The Message Of The Gospel:
 - That Was Preached By The Apostle Paul!
 - Perhaps Philemon Met Paul:
 - In The City Of Ephesus:
 - When He Was There Attending To Some Business Matters!
 - Or - Perhaps He Heard The Gospel:
 - From An Old Friend, Epaphras:
 - Who Was Telling Anyone Who Would Listen About:
 - The New Freedom & Forgiveness He Had Found Through Faith In A Person Called Jesus!
4. We Don't Know All The Details:
 - About How & When Philemon:
 - Turned To Jesus As His Savior - But - When He Did:
 - His World Turned Upside-Down!
 - As It Does To All Who Trust In Christ!
 - Because - The Gospel:
 - Transformed Philemon:

- From The Inside Out!
 - And Now - He Possessed A Love For God & A Love For God's People:
 - That He Never Had Before!
- In Fact - He Opened Up His Home:
 - So That Other Members Of The Church:
 - No Matter What Their Status Or Station:
 - Could Meet For Fellowship & For Worship & For Prayer!
 - He Also Sought To Use The Resources God Had Given Him:
 - To Help & To "Refresh" His New-Found Family In Christ!
- 5. And So - This New Life:
 - Which He & His Whole Family Had Found - In Christ:
 - Continued - Until - He Caught Word That:
 - One Of Paul's Companions Was In Town!
 - Tychicus - And He Brought A Letter:
 - From Paul!
 - So - Philemon & His Wife - Apphia:
 - Along With Their Son - Archippus - Who Was Probably Filling In As Pastor:
 - Got Things Ready For Tychicus:
 - And For The Church - To Come Together To Hear The Words From Paul!
 - Cleaning! Rearranging! Praying!
 - By They Way - What A Wonderful Thing It Is:
 - For A Christian Family:
 - To Worship & To Serve Together! What A Blessing To Each Other & To The Church!
 - But- When The Time Came:
 - And The Church Was Gathered:
 - And Tychicus Arrived - Philemon Noticed Another Man With Him! A Young Man! A Familiar Man!
 - It Was A Man Named Onesimus! A Man - Who Was, In Fact, His Slave!
 - 6. I Think We Can Imagine:
 - The Awkward Reunion Between:
 - This Master & His Slave - Between Philemon & Onesimus:
 - While Tychicus Was Reading Paul's Letter Before The Church!
 - Because - Those Two Men Had A History!
 - Onesmus Had Ran Away From His Master!
 - And - According To Roman Law, He Was A Criminal Fugitive, And Could Be Punished By His Master Without Mercy!
 - But Even More - Onesimus Had Defrauded His Master - And Had Likely Stolen Some Things To Help Him Make His Escape!
 - J. B. Lightfoot - "Slaves Were Constantly Crucified For Far Lighter Offenses Than His! A Thief And A Runaway, He Had No Claim To Forgiveness!"
 - But - There He Was Again!
 - Not Only In Colosse:
 - But In The Home Of His Master!
 - And The World Of Both Philemon & Onesimus Was About To Be Turned Upside-Down Once Again!
 - Because Of:
 - 1. ***The Activity Of The Gospel!***
 - Even Though Philemon Was A Christian:
 - And - As We Learned From Colossians:
 - So Was Onesimus - Their Salvation From Sin:
 - Did Not Mean The End Of The Gospel's Work And Activity In Their Lives!
 - No - Instead - It Was Just The Beginning!
 - Because - What God Used:
 - To Save Then - Is What God Would Use:
 - To Sanctify Them!
 - Through The Ongoing Activity:

- Of The Gospel! See:

- God Uses The Gospel:
 - To Save Us!
 - To Bring Us From Death Unto Life:
 - And From Darkness Into Light!
 - And The Gospel Will Turn Your World Upside-Down!
 - When You Are Crushed:
 - By The Weight Of Your Sin:
 - Against A Holy & Righteous God!
 - Saying From Your Heart - As Isaiah Did - "Woe Is Me! For I Am Undone! Because I Am A Man Of Unclean Lips!" (Isaiah 6:5)
 - But - When You Hear How:
 - "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared!" (Titus 2:4)
 - How Much More Will Your Heart Turn To The One Who Lived For You & Died For You & Rose Again From The Dead!
 - When You Turn To & Trust In Jesus:
 - To Save You From Your Sin & Spiritual Slavery:
 - It Will Turn Your World Upside-Down! Praise God! Has It? Won't You Let It? It's A Good Turn! A Good Change!
 - But The Work & Activity Of The Gospel:
 - Will Not End There! Because:
- God Uses The Gospel:
 - To Sanctify Us - As Well!
 - To Purify You & To Refine You:
 - As You Would Precious Metals With Fire!
 - It Is Through The Gospel:
 - That He Continues:
 - To Awaken Us - Sometimes:
 - From Our Spiritual Slumber!
 - To Unsettle Us - Sometimes:
 - From Our Ingrained Beliefs!
 - And - To Disturb Us - Sometimes:
 - From Our Comfortable Existence!
 - This Does Not Always Mean:
 - That You Have Been Unfaithful Or Unfruitful:
 - Needing Correction!
 - Because, Even Faith-Filled & Faith-Ful Believers Still Need Further "Instruction In Righteousness!"
 - And When Paul Sent Onesimus Back To His Master's House:
 - God Was Using The Gospel:
 - To Once Again - Turn Their World's Upside-Down!
 - For The Glory Of God & For The Good Of God's People!
 - You & I Need To Remember:
 - The Activity Of The Gospel!
 - God Still Uses It In Our Lives:
 - To Confront & To Challenge Sensitive Issues - That Will Never Be Solved Without It!
 - Sensitive Issues Like:
 - Prejudice & Bitterness & Injustice!
 - Issues That You & I Might Be Blind To:
 - Even As We Are Striving To Live For The Lord Faithfully & Lovingly!
 - Remember & Be Open To:
 - The Ongoing Activity Of The Gospel!
 - Also - Need To Remember:

2. ***The Answer Of The Gospel!***

- All Those Questions You Have & All Those Feelings You Experience:
 - When Your World Is Turned Upside-Down:

- Can Find Their Answers & Their Solutions:
 - In The Grace & In The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!
 - Do You Believe This?
- I Believe - That Before Philemon Heard The Words:
 - Of The Letter Addressed To Him Personally:
 - He First Heard The Words Addressed To The Church - In The Letter Of Colossians!
- Because - So Much Of What Paul:
 - Would Be Calling On Him To Do - In Philemon:
 - Was Rooted In The Doctrine Of Christ In Colossians!
 - "The Whole Of Colossians Is More Or Less Overshadowed By Paul's Concern About Onesimus!" (John Knox)
- Remember - Back In Colossians 1 - Paul Describes:
 - The Glory Of Christ!
 - Colossians 1:14-18 - "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: / Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: / For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: / And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. / And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence!"
 - Though Creator & Controller Of All Things:
 - Yet - He Still Provided - 1:14 - "Redemption Through His Blood, Even The Forgiveness Of Sins!"
 - And Both Philemon & Onesimus:
 - Heard These Words:
 - About The Glory Of Christ:
 - As Lord Over Heaven & Earth!
- Remember - Back In Colossians 3 - Paul Describes:
 - The Goodness Of Christ!
 - Colossians 3:11-15 - "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. / Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; / Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. / And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. / And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful!"
 - The New Man That Is Created In Christ:
 - Is One Of Goodness & Grace!
 - It Breaks Down All Kinds Of Barriers - Including:
 - Distinctions In Race!
 - Like - "Greek" & "Jew"
 - Distinctions In Refinement!
 - Like - "Barbarian" & "Scythian"
 - And Even - Distinctions In Rank!
 - Like - "Bond" & "Free"
 - And Both Philemon & Onesimus:
 - Heard These Words:
 - About The Goodness Of Christ:
 - And That Christians Are To Follow In His Footsteps - By - "Forbearing One Another & Forgiving One Another!"
- And As Philemon & Onesimus Were Standing There:
 - Perhaps Even *Facing* Each Other:
 - God Was Reminding Them Through His Word:
 - That The Answers To Their Questions:
 - And The Solution To Their Dilemma - Could Be Found In Christ!
 - And This Is Still True!
 - When Your World Is Turned Upside-Down:
 - Remember That Christ Has The Answer For You! And You Can Trust In Him!
 - Now - This May Seem Trite & Simplistic!
 - Especially When A Trial Or A Tragedy Shakes The Very Foundation Of Your Faith!

- And The Answers To Your “Whys” Don’t Seem Very Helpful Or Convincing!
- But - Just Because The Answer Is Not The One You Are Looking For Or Hoping For - Doesn’t Make It Wrong!
- **IE:** Like Asking What The Weather Is Going To Be Like! Warm & Sunny Vs. Cold & Rainy!
- Because - The Promises Of God To His People Remain True!
- Like Romans 8:28 - “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose!”
- Like 1 Corinthians 10:13 - “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it!”
- So - Remember The Answer Of The Gospel!
- But Then - Also - Remember:

3. *The Appeal Of The Gospel!*

- I Can Imagine - After Tychicus Finished Reading Colossians:
 - And Both Philemon & Onesimus Were Thrilled In Their Hearts:
 - From The Truths They Just Heard:
 - Tychicus Holds Up His Hand - And Says - “Wait! There’s More!”
 - And He Pulls Out Another Scroll, And Begins Reading These Words:
 - “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer!”
 - It Was Now Time For Philemon To Put:
 - The Principles Of Colossians:
 - Into Practice!
 - Philemon Needed To Trust God’s Truth!
 - But Then - He Needed To:
 - And We Need To:
 - Obey & Apply That Truth!
 - In This Masterful:
 - And Moving Letter:
 - It Reflects The Gospel In Every Part! Including:
 - The Reception Of Grace!
 - When Paul Wrote In:
 - 1:12 - “Thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels!”
 - As God The Father Has Received You:
 - In & Through Christ:
 - Receive Your New Brother-In-Christ! Also:
 - The Reconciliation Of Grace!
 - When Paul Wrote In:
 - 1:15-16 - “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; / Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?”
 - As You Are Reconciled With God:
 - In & Through Christ:
 - Be Reconciled To Each Other!
 - Let There Be Forbearance & Forgiveness!
 - Colossians 3:13 - “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye!” Also:
 - The Restoration Of Grace!
 - When Paul Wrote In:
 - 1:18 - “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account!”
 - As You Were Restored By Christ:
 - When He Took All Of The Sin & Debt You Owed To God:
 - Upon Himself!
 - And - Colossians 2:14 - “Took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross!”
 - Let The Appeal Of The Gospel:
 - Continue Its Work In Your Heart & In Your Life!
 - Consider All Of Your Circumstances:
 - All Of Your Relationships:

- And All Of Your Trials:
 - In Light Of The Grace Of The Gospel!
- Because - As Martin Luther Once Wrote:
 - “What Christ Has Done For Us With God The Father, That St. Paul Does For Onesimus With Philemon! For We Are All His Onesimi, If We Believe!”
- And We See This Even Further:
 - As We Dig Deeper Into This Letter:
 - And See:

4. ***The Approach Of The Gospel!***

- In The First 3 Verses Of Paul’s Letter:
 - He Both Reflects & Reminds Philemon:
 - Of What Gospel Grace Should Look Like:
 - Within The Body Of Christ!
- In 1:1 - We Hear:
 - A Tender Approach!
 - “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer!”
 - Look At Those Descriptions Again!
 - Paul - A Prisoner!
 - Timothy - A Brother!
 - Philemon - A Beloved Fellow-Laborer!
 - All - Within The Sphere:
 - Of Christian Love And Fellowship!
 - Even Though Paul Was In ***Bondage*** - There Was A Tighter ***Bond*** Between Those Brothers Than The Chains On His Wrists!
 - And Now - The ***Bondage*** Of Onesimus:
 - That Fugitive Slave:
 - Has Been Transformed Into That Same ***Bond - In Christ!***
- Also In 1:1-2 - We See:
 - A Tactful Approach!
 - “And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house!”
 - Even Though This Letter Was A *Personal* Letter That Dealt With A Very *Personal* Matter:
 - It Was Not Necessarily *Private!*
 - Paul Brings The Matter To The Attention:
 - Of Philemon’s Family:
 - As Well As His Church!
 - Because They Would All Be Involved In Resolving This Sensitive Issue!
 - Hebrews 10:24 - “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works!”
 - Onesimus Did Not Just Belong To Philemon Now!
 - He Belonged To Christ & To His Church!
- And In 1:3 - We Find:
 - A Truthful Approach!
 - “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - Although Grace & Peace:
 - Are Common Needs For All Believers!
 - Yet - This Prayer:
 - Takes On A Unique Significance:
 - For The Specific Needs:
 - Addressed In This Letter!
 - In Order To Apply These Words:
 - Philemon Would Need:
 - The Grace & Peace Of The Lord!
- Is This How You Approach:
 - Sensitive Matters:
 - In Your Own Heart & In The Lives Of Others?
 - With Tenderness & Tact & The Truth?

- This Is What The Grace Of The Gospel Looks Like!

Conclusion:

1. So - Keep Growing This Grace!
 - This Is What Paul Anticipated:
 - As He Wrote This Letter!
 - It Is Interesting To Note That Paul Doesn't Appear To Address The Issue Of Human Slavery Head-On:
 - As The Injustice That It Is!
 - And This Has Caused Many To See Biblical Sanction & Even Support For Slavery!
 - In The World & Even Within The Church!
2. But - As Goldwin Smith Once Wrote:
 - "It Is Very True That St. Paul Sends Back A Fugitive Slave To His Master. But Does He Send Him Back As A Slave?"
 - In 1:21 - Paul Says This To Philemon - "Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say!"
 - We Can't Say For Sure What Happened Between Philemon & Onesimus That Day!
 - But We **Can** Say That The Seed Of Gospel Grace:
 - Strikes At The Very Heart Of Slavery - Because It "Transforms The Slave Into A Brother Beloved!"
3. And This Is Why:
 - When Rightly Understood & Properly Applied:
 - The Grace Of The Gospel:
 - Can Continue To Provide:
 - The Greatest Solutions:
 - To The Greatest Problems!
 - Whatever They May Be!
 - And When The Time Comes:
 - For Your World To Be Turned Upside-Down - *Again*:
 - Keep Growing:
 - In The Grace Of The Gospel!

Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
4245 North 200 West
Greenfield, Indiana 46140
317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com